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E.O. 12065: GDS 7/15/86 (DAVIS, VERA L.) OR-P
TAGS: OVIP, AR
SUBJECT: (U) REACTION TO HIDALGO VISIT

1. (C) SUMMARY NAVY SECRETARY EDWARD HIDALGO SPENT SOME 30 HOURS IN BUENOS AIRES JULY 2-3. HE CALLED ON PRESIDENT VIDELA AND HELD TALKS WITH NAVY COMMANDER LAMBRUSCHINI AND HIS ASSOCIATES. THE VISIT RAISED EXPECTATIONS, BUT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ACCEPTED THE NEWS THAT THE HIDALGO VISIT DID NOT SIGNAL A QUICK END OF THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY AMENDMENT. THE VISIT WAS A CLEAR PLUS FOR THE ARGENTINE NAVY, DESPITE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE VISIT DID NOT SIGNAL RESTORED SUPPLY CHANNELS.

THE OTHER SERVICES WERE GENERALLY FAVORABLE TO THE VISIT DESPITE THE RIVALRY WHICH CHARACTERIZES INTER-SERVICE RELATIONS HERE. PRESS COVERAGE WAS HOSPITABLE AND FAVORABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) ON THE WHOLE THE RESPONSE TO SECRETARY HIDALGO'S VISIT WAS GOOD. IT WAS VIEWED AS A CONTINUATION OF THE IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND ARGENTINA WHICH BEGAN WITH THE GOODPASTER VISIT AND CONTINUED WITH THE VISITS OF SECRETARY HODGES AND AMBASSADOR SMITH. THE REACTION OF THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES TO THE HIDALGO VISIT WAS GENERALLY POSITIVE. OBVIOUSLY THE NAVY WAS PLEASED THAT THE US NAVY SECRETARY AND VICE ADMIRAL FOLEY CAME TO ARGENTINA. ACCORDING TO THE EMBASSY'S NAVAL ATTACHE, THE ARGENTINE NAVY WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH THE ACQUISITION OF PATROL AIRCRAFT AND MUTUAL DEFENSE NEEDS, WHICH WERE MAJOR TOPICS OF DISCUSSION DURING MEETINGS HIDALGO AND FOLEY HELD WITH NAVAL OFFICERS.

3. (C) THE ARGENTINE ARMY'S REACTION WAS POSITIVE, IF SOMEWHAT BLASE. FULLY AWARE THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO NAVIES (WHICH ENGAGE IN JOINT MANEUVERS SUCH AS UNITAS) IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE TWO ARMIES, THE CONSENSUS AMONG MEMBERS OF THE ARMY WAS THAT THE VISIT WAS A GOOD IDEA. THERE WAS NO EXPRESSED RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF THE ARMY THAT THE NAVY SECRETARY WAS THE ONE WHO VISITED INSTEAD OF SOME ARMY VISITOR. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE HIDALGO VISIT MEANT THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS ABOUT TO REPEAL THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY AMENDMENT WAS NATURALLY ASKED BY SOME ARMY OFFICERS. WHEN IT WAS MADE CLEAR THAT THE VISIT DID NOT IMPLY ANY REPEAL THE RESPONSE WAS TAKEN WELL.

4. (U) THE PRESS COVERAGE OF NAVY SECRETARY HIDALGO'S VISIT TO ARGENTINA WAS FAVORABLE. AS WAS EXPECTED, HIDALGO'S VISIT WAS CONSISTENTLY DESCRIBED AS ANOTHER STEP IN IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE

US AND ARGENTINA WHICH BEGAN WITH THE GOODPASTER VISIT. ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING ITS BREVITY, THE VISIT WAS GIVEN PROMINENT AND EXTENSIVE COVERAGE.

5. (U) AN EDITORIAL IN THE JULY 6 LA OPINION EMPHASIZED THE BELIEF THAT HIDALGO'S VISIT INDICATED THAT THE US HAD FINALLY COME TO REALIZE THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF ARGENTINA. IT WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE VISIT WAS ANOTHER INDICATION THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND ARGENTINA WAS IMPROVING, AND THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE POSSIBLY HEADED TOWARDS "AN ALLIANCE." THE JULY 6 LA NACION EDITORIAL FOLLOWED A SIMILAR LINE, BUT WITHOUT ALLUDING TO A POSSIBLE "ALLIANCE." LA NACION STATED THAT HIDALGO'S VISIT SUGGESTED A RENEWED INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE US IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC. EDITORIAL COVERAGE WAS BALANCED AND DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE HIDALGO VISIT--NO MATTER HOW FAVORABLE IN ITS OTHER ASPECTS--MEANT THAT THE REPEAL OF THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY AMENDMENT WAS IMMINENT.

6. (U) SECRETARY HIDALGO'S SCHEDULE IN ARGENTINA WAS AS FOLLOWS: JULY 2 - ARRIVAL AT AEROPARQUE AT 0730, WHERE THE SECRETARY WAS MET BY THE AMBASSADOR, NAVY CHIEF OF STAFF VICE ADMIRAL ANAYA AND NAVY SECRETARY GENERAL, VICE ADMIRAL CASAS; CALL ON AMBASSADOR CASTRO AT 0900; 0115 MEETING WITH EMBASSY'S COUNTRY TEAM; 1000 MEETING WITH THE MILGROUP; 1115 MEETING WITH THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE NAVY, ADMIRAL LAMBRUSCHINI; 1300 LUNCHEON BY ADMIRAL LAMBRUSCHINI; 1700 MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE, REAR ADMIRAL DE LA RIVA; 1800 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA; 2030 RECEPTION GIVEN BY AMBASSADOR CASTRO. ON JULY 3: 0830 MEETING WITH THE MILGROUP AND DAO; 1030 MEETING WITH AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN; 1130 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR CASTRO; 1230 LUNCHEON WITH AMBASSADOR CASTRO; DEPARTED ARGENTINA AT 1330.
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